

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action that was mailed on December 28, 2005. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in this application. By this Amendment, a clarifying amendment is made to claim 11. Also, claim 18 is reduced in scope, by the deletion therefrom of features (ii) and (iiia). Finally, typographical errors are corrected in claims 31 and 32. New claim 34 recites a dope comprising the cellulose acetate composition of claim 11. Claims 9, 10, 23, 30, and 33 are cancelled, without prejudice. No new matter is introduced by the present Amendment. Claims 1, 11-13, 18, 20, 27-29, 31, 32, and 34 are pending in the application.

Claims 9-12, 18, 20, 23, 29, 32, and 33 were rejected under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112 as failing to comply with the written description requirement. In a telephonic interview on 31 January 2006, the Examiner's attention was drawn to basis in the specification for the claim language that had been questioned by the Examiner. The Examiner kindly indicated, in a Paper mailed 27 February 2006, that this ground of rejection is withdrawn.

Claims 9, 10, 18, 30, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by JP 2-251607 (Uenishi). The rejection is respectfully traversed. Claims 9, 10, 30, and 33 are cancelled, leaving only claim 18 for consideration in this connection. Claim 18 is reduced in scope by the present Amendment, and now requires feature (iiib). Uenishi teaches that

As for the amount of this organic acid that is to be admixed, it need to be an amount that is equivalent to 0.5 ~ 5 mol, more preferably 1.0 ~ 3.0 mol, in correspondence with the density of the very small amount of metal ions contained in the cellulose ester solution.

USPTO translation, page 5. Accordingly, unlike the presently claimed invention, Uenishi fails to teach a small amount of metal component in cellulose acetate and a correspondingly smaller amount of acid component in cellulose acetate. The content of citric acid (20 ppm) in cellulose triacetate in the Working Example of Uenishi corresponds to 3.4×10^{-4} mol/g, which is significantly different from the amount of acid component in claim 18. Claim 18 requires “an acid ... in a proportion of 1×10^{-9} to 3×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate”. The largest of these numbers, 3×10^{-5} mol/g, is about 10 times smaller than the 3.4×10^{-4} mol/g disclosed by Uenishi. Moreover, Uenishi fails to teach the technical role of the recited amounts of acid and metal component for improving stability (including thermal stability) and releasability of a film from a support.

Claims 9, 10, 18, 20, 23, 30, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by GB 2 101 136 A (Yabe). The rejection is respectfully traversed. Claims 9, 10, 23, 30, and 33 are cancelled, leaving only claims 18 and 20 for consideration in this connection. Yabe teaches that “... cellulose triacetate ... contains 50-100 ppm alkaline earth metal”. Page 2, lines 9-10. Yabe fails to teach or suggest not only the amount of acid components of cellulose acetate recited in claims 18 and 20 but also the specific content of metal components recited therein. It is noted that the maximum content of metal component disclosed in Yabe, 100 ppm, corresponds to 5×10^{-6} equivalent as calcium base. Accordingly, Yabe fails to anticipate either of claims 18 or 20.

It has been pointed out above that neither Uenishi nor Yabe anticipates claim 18 or claim 20. The claimed subject matter is also not obvious from the disclosures of those references, even if

they were to be combined. The references fail to suggest not only the use of very small amounts of acid components but also the use of relatively large amounts of metal components. In particular, the combination of the specific amounts of acid components and the specific amounts of metal components is ***not motivated*** by the Uenishi and Yabe disclosures. The present invention provides remarkable advantages. The Declaration of Dr. Shibata, previously made of record in this application, demonstrates the remarkable advantages. Sample F in the declaration corresponds to Uenishi, since sample F comprises cellulose acetate, a small amount of metal and citric acid (20 ppm). Sample E corresponds to the Yabe disclosure, since sample E does not include a large amount of metal components. As is apparent from Table 1 of the Declaration, the sample corresponding to Uenishi affects the stability of cellulose triacetate adversely, since the sample includes only a small amount of metal. The sample corresponding to Yabe fails to improve the stability of cellulose triacetate, since it too includes only a small amount of metal. These results coincide with the results of Comparative Examples in the specification, e.g. Comparative Example 3 in lines 15-17 on page 36 of the specification. In contrast to Uenishi and Yabe, the present invention provides remarkably improved stability, as shown by samples A-D in the Declaration. Furthermore, the releasability of cellulose triacetate is improved by the present invention, as is apparent from the Examples in Applicants' specification. These advantages of the invention of claims 18 and 20 would have been totally unexpected to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the present invention was made.

In view of the above amendments and Remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw all rejections of record and to pass this application to Issue. If there are any questions, the

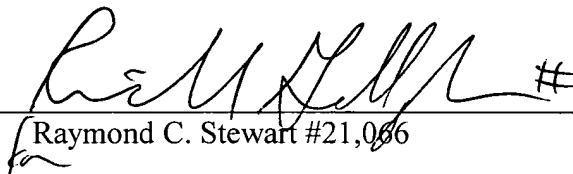
Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Richard Gallagher (Registration No. 28,781) at (703) 205-8008.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 CFR 1.16 or under 37 CFR 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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